



The Little Church with the big heart



From Rev. Mark C. Bigley

the "S" word...

don't forget the
harvest dinner
October 23!

Years ago, I heard a bishop say that *that we do with all that we have all of* lot more congruent to me that all the and shenanigans that I've witnessed over the last 30+ years. Stewardship defined in that one sentence is more than the old *time, talent and treasure* refrain that we get out and dust off every year. Stewardship involves every choice we make and do not make. It's that intricate. But intricate was never meant to be burdensome. Our choices awaken us to the Divine Core at the center of our being, waiting for us to dive in and descend into the depths of the abundance of God.

stewardship is *all the time*. This feels a programs, gimmicks

Stewardship goes back at least as far as the Hebrew people, saying, *You are to be my holy people* (Exodus) which to put it simply, means "like or resembling God." Be creators, givers, lovers as made in the image and likeness of God. Stewardship of our livelihoods for the Hebrew was simple and practical: a tithe. The Levites one of the 12 tribes, the priests and caregivers of the Ark of the Covenant and later the temple with its rituals and prayers spent their work hours attending to these things whereas others sought to their flocks, planting, vineyards, food preparation and families. A tithe would take care of all of this. But there was also another reason besides practicality for the Hebrews to give *proportionally* of their income. The people understood the story of the Dead Sea. The Jordan River runs into the Dead Sea but there is no tributary running out of it. It's dead because it receives but does not give. Metaphorically, when life is out of balance, it deteriorates. Stewardship is the process of receiving and giving, seeking the Spirit to keep life in balance. If we do not receive enough (e.g. prayer/spiritual disciplines, self care, diet, exercise, rest etc.) we become depleted and sick. If we do not give enough, we become engorged physically, emotionally and spiritually.

So it is good to review our lives along all of our domains (spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, interpersonal relationships) to see if we are attentive to the Spirit creating in us a rhythm of giving and receiving so that our lives are in balance personally and interpersonally. When we are ill, we often go to the doctor for the physical problem and are handed a physical remedy. But do we stop to think *why* we became out of balance enough that we became physically ill in the first place? Could our spiritual and emotional life be out of balance and could it have caused our malady? Or perhaps it may have been our diet?

Take some time this fall to review the question of balance in all the areas of your life. And remember to come to the Harvest Dinner October 23rd, discussed elsewhere in this *Albanac*. We're planning to have a good time to celebrate our lives together. There's no agenda except to celebrate our lives together. That's it. Stewardship isn't rocket science. It starts with Thanksgiving. It's as simple as that.

**Peace,
Mark**



BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS—OCTOBER 9TH, 9:15 A.M.



St. Francis, the patron saint of animals, is the figure most associated with the blessing of the animals. But It wasn't a few weeks ago when we read the story about Jonah and God's delight that Nineveh was saved, not just for the people but also "...for the many animals." During agrarian times, people measured wealth not like we do today in abstract terms with pieces of paper (money, bonds, stocks). People measured their wealth based on the concrete practice of the number and quality of their animals. I remember a Boy Scout merit badge called "animal husbandry."

I pondered the word "husbandry" until it finally dawned on me that as a human being, I was called to *nurture* animals, not just *have* animals.

I recall meeting a Shoshone Medicine Man named Willie (who was also a chalice bearer for the Roman Catholic Church) while living in Wyoming years ago. He included a prayer for the "four legged people." I was caught up short, having never seeing animals in that light. But the more I come to think of it, *Boots*, the boxer I grew up with and *Shiloh*, the Yorkie Kathy and I have now, are *more than objects*. They are full of the life of God.

Conversations I've had with some of you reveal to me about how dear your pets are to you. We have *relationships* with our pets. There is a dynamic of love that resonates between us. Our God is a God of relationship. We interact with them and are the better off for it. We receive something from that relationship, something of meaning called *joy*.

I look forward to experiencing that joy together October 9th. In case of inclement weather, we'll hold the celebration in Wynn Hall.

Peace,
Mark

Contemplative Corner

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door



and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done

The true contemplative is not one who prepares his mind for particular message that he wants or expects to hear, but is one who remains empty because he knows that he can never expect to anticipate the words that will transform his darkness into light. He does not even anticipate a special kind of transformation. He does not demand light instead of darkness. He waits on the Word of God in silence, and, when he is "answered," it is not so much by a word that burst into his silence. It is by his si-

News from the Senior Warden

CALLING ALL YOUTH! CALLING ALL YOUTH!



Grades 1 and Up!
Sunday, October 9
Noon-2:00 p.m.

It's Games and Grub in the Youth Hut

Bring a Friend
 Be There!

WE NEED YOUR HELP--AND IT WON'T COST YOU

ANY TIME OR MONEY!

We have lots of folks in and out our facilities (thanks be to God!). When you leave the church please make sure you lock the doors behind you keeping in mind that door going in to Wynn Hall is a little tricky.



be-

Aging is not synonymous with losing your teeth. Good dental care controls plaque, prevents cavities, gum disease, and tooth loss so seniors should continue their once/twice a year dental visits. It is important to monitor chipped teeth or old fillings where bacteria can enter and cause cavities. Dentists can also treat the dry mouth that aging and certain medications can cause. Without saliva, the body loses another line of defense against bacteria. If the person already has dentures, the dentist can check for ill-fitting teeth and screen for oral cancer. If brushing teeth is painful, the dentist can also suggest rinses and gels that will clean the teeth without causing pain.

Beth Walters RN, Parish Nurse

IHN NEWS

“Camp Out to Stamp Out” Family Homelessness

Interfaith Homeless Network (IHN) will be hosting the third annual “Camp Out to Stamp Out” Family Homelessness event on Saturday, October 8 from 5pm through Sunday morning, October 9th at 7am. If you do not wish to do the camp out you can also participate on Saturday evening from 7pm to 11pm. This event is a fundraiser for IHN who, since 1998, has served 600 families with a total of 1,831 individuals and 1,351 children. At this time, there are 51 churches in the Chattanooga area that support IHN in hosting families.

St. John’s UMC created a wonderful video on IHN and this fundraising event: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFWqHENVvBA>

St. Alban’s Men’s Club at work helping The Blue Monarch

On Thursday morning, Sept. 22, your St. Albans Men’s club left for a work session at The Blue Monarch. We had two trucks loaded with supplies for all kinds of projects. There were six of us going for two days of helping them keep their three homes in good repair. We installed ceiling fans, kitchen disposals, light fixtures, painted, cut down trees and trimmed bushes, changed out 10 toilet seats, installed blinds in 9 windows, repaired furniture, hung towel bars, unstopped sinks, repaired leaky faucets, replaced a rotten porch post, plus a host of little things they needed. Thanks to Marilyn and Gary Fisher we stayed at their Monteagle home and even were served a hearty breakfast, very reasonable rates too. Thanks to the ECW for helping fund the cost of materials. During our visit we did get a chance to visit with the staff, residents and their children which was fun. We enjoyed our trip and plan to visit again in the near future. Anyone interested in joining us on our next visit, please let us know.



TWO SPOTS ARE FILLED....ONLY ONE REMAINS....

Interested in how the church and/or the Diocese work? We need one more Lay Delegate to represent St. Alban's at the East Tennessee Convention February 11-12, 2012 in Knoxville. It's also a great opportunity to mix and mingle with other Episcopalians in the Diocese. If you are interested let Fr. Mark or Sherri know SOON....just one spot remains!

Diocesan Convention, February 10-11 in Knoxville

I find it ironic that in our age of global awareness, how our busy-ness has made it increasingly difficult to interact with fellow churches in the same city, not to mention the same diocese. I find myself personally unaware of what's going on in the diocese when years ago, it seemed easier to know. Perhaps my other full time job keeps my time more localized. But I find out that unless I occasionally get outside of my own parochial surroundings, I am the poorer for it.

To be honest, I've never been a fan of business meetings. But the adult in me also realizes that unless care is given to the structures we live by (our society suffers now from the dissolution of our social/religious structures) we lack the container into which the Spirit creates our form.

I find the most valuable thing for me in going to diocesan convention, is that I rub up against other people with other revelations of God's glorious love. I get to interact with people, clergy and laity, from whom I can receive the light of new ideas. There are displays filled with various ministries, books and other items which renew me. I also get to participate in worship in a more expansive community, which isn't something I want on a steady diet, as I feel more comfortable in a small church with its greater intimacy. But a larger community once in awhile tells me that God is involved in a far larger world than my own.

St. Alban's sends three delegates (and three alternates) to convention every year. I would enjoy spending the day and a half with you. Please speak to me or a member of the vestry if you sense a calling to attend convention this year.

Blessings abound upon you,

Mark



Children's Ministry

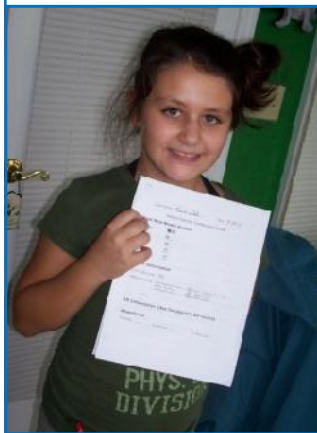
I recall reading a book called *The Sacred Play of Children*. Children experience life, the world and spirituality through this interaction. This is why once a month we have begun offering children's interactive homilies so that they can begin to experience the life of the gospel in the midst of the liturgy with everyday objects that make sense to them. And they might reach the big kid inside us adults too!

The next dates for Children's interactive homilies will be:

October 23rd

November 20th

December 18th



People often ask about the children of Blue Monarch and whether they are able to live a "normal" life here. Kiera is an example of how a child not only gets to experience the things other children do - she lives in a stable, supportive environment that actually helps her thrive. Kiera and her mother, Stacy, attended a Parent-Teacher conference and Kiera received grades that were all in the high 90's! Her Composite Reading score was 416 with a goal of only 220. Kiera gets to begin a fun adventure in Girl Scouts soon and she loves her school and the good friends she has made there.

Congratulations, Kiera. Your entire Blue Monarch family

Jennifer Cook in charge of St. Alban's Nursery

We are pleased to announce the new addition of Jennifer Cook, who will be in charge of the nursery beginning Sunday, September 11. Jennifer's education and previous work experiences are in child care. Jennifer currently works at the Sports Barn North in their nursery and housekeeping departments. She has done a fantastic job for them for several years. Jennifer truly enjoys working with children and is a welcomed addition. She will be with us every Sunday from 9:30 until after the 10:30 service.

